



## New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau

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### **Transplanting pink lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*)**

Source: Jean Stefanik, Education & Conservation, **NH Orchid Society**. (5/26/2004)

NH law gives landowners in NH the right to do anything they want with plants on their property, endangered or not. While not on the official "threatened" or "endangered" lists, the pink lady slipper "*Cypripedium acaule*" is the victim of uneducated picking of flowers, unsuccessful attempts at transplanting, and habitat loss.

That said, the optimal time for transplanting if you absolutely must, is when they are dormant – i.e., mark the plant with a colored marker of some kind, and wait until the leaves have grown and then died back - actually fall is the best time. The other HUGE factor in transplanting – and keep in mind, transplanting is rarely successful, and only works 5% of the time – is to get ALL of the root structure without breaking it. Roots on pink lady slippers usually extend about 3 ft. in ANY direction, and stay within 2 inches of the surface. Therefore, it's virtually impossible to get all of the roots in a woodland setting without breaking some. Most transplanted plants die; maybe not the 1st year, but you often find they don't come up the 2nd or 3rd year. In the wild, the plant can live up to 100 years.

So, my ultimate recommendation is to NOT give some to your friend, unless your population is in dire danger of being destroyed because of construction on your property. Rather, invite him/her to your location and enjoy their beauty together!

If she chose to purchase a nursery grown plant (see Vermont Slipper Co, and others online), the roots would have developed from seedling stage in the container. The long fragile roots would be "contained" and planted such that there is little or no disturbance to the roots when transplanting. And they would only be available during a season when success in planting is optimal.

Regarding where to put them: Pink lady slippers require the sort of habitat you see them growing in naturally. To be more specific, it must be slightly acidic soil like accumulated leaf matter mixed with pine needles, which also help the drainage. It must have mixed sunlight - they are rarely in dense undergrowth, rarely in bright open sun, often near the edges of pine forests, along trails where the sunlight penetrates to some degree. They depend on a symbiotic relationship with micorrhizal fungi in their roots for food production, similar to the way some non-green plants like mushrooms produce food. So planting in an area of known fungus, or taking a significant portion of the leafy/pine material when transplanting is essential.

Remember, transplanting very rarely works (the same is true for other native orchid species) and while I am telling you all of this in detail, it is for the purpose of DISCOURAGING you from moving your plants! And by the way, it is expressly illegal to remove any plant from public property or private property without the written permission of the owner.